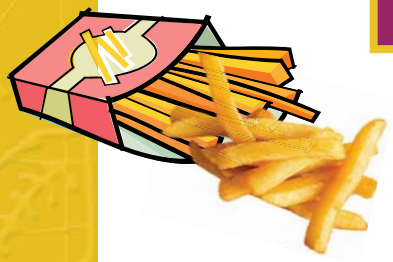
Smart youth Choices

LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

A Community Nutrition Education Program of the LSU AgCenter for Grades 5 - 8



Fats in Foods: How Much for Kids?

Is ice cream OK for kids? How about fried chicken nuggets or fries? You're smart to wonder about higher fat foods for kids. Here's the scoop.

Your child needs some fat from food.

Trying to cut way back on fat may seem like a good idea. But your child needs some fat to be healthy:

- For energy to play, learn and grow.
- To grow properly.
- To use vitamins from food.
- To add flavor to foods.

Most food energy should come from grain products (such as bread, pasta and rice); vegetables; fruits; low-fat dairy foods; and beans, lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs or nuts. Be careful with nuts. They may cause choking in 2- to 3-year-olds.

It's OK to eat foods with more fat sometimes. Enjoy a small bowl of ice cream or small order of fries occasionally. Then choose foods with less saturated fat for the next meal or the next day.

Eating less saturated fat is good family advice.

Once your child turns 2, learning a habit of low-fat eating is healthful. If family meals and snacks have less fat, your child will learn that way, too.

Choose to limit foods with saturated fat. Eating a lot of saturated fat increases the chance of heart disease later in your lives. *Saturated fats are solid at room temperature.* Butter, stick margarine and fat in meat are examples.

Eating lots of any fat, saturated or not, can add up to too many calories. Weight gain over time may lead to diabetes at an early age. Choose mostly lean and low-fat foods to help your child and you keep your healthy weight.

Do you have an infant or toddler under age 2? If so, low-fat eating isn't advised before age 2. Little ones need more fat for brain development.

For Less Fat in Family Foods

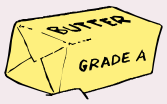
You can plan and prepare family foods with less fat. Check (✓) one or two things to try this week. Add your own idea.

- ☐ Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods, especially those with less saturated fat.
- ☐ Limit foods high in saturated fat (bacon, sausage, other high-fat processed meats).
- ☐ Keep low-fat snacks in your kitchen: raw vegetables, fruit, pretzels and bagels.

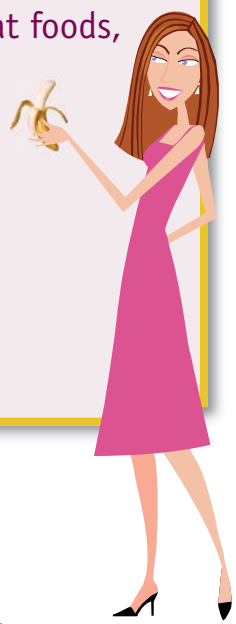
- ☐ Make grain products, vegetables and fruits part of family meals and snacks.
- ☐ Buy mostly fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt, and low-fat cheese.

- ☐ Make cooked dry beans, fish, lean meats and chicken the center of the meal.

- ☐ Use vegetable oils. Limit solid fats, such as butter, hard margarine and lard.



- ☐ Use less fat when you cook.
- ☐ Cut fat from meat, and take skin off chicken.
- ☐ Broil, roast, microwave or stir-fry. Frying adds fat.
- ☐ Limit creamy sauces and salad dressings.
- ☐ Offer small amounts of higher fat foods, such as fries and cheese.
- ☐ Serve mostly fruit for dessert.



Your ideas:

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